

STAT

Christopher M. Wright

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Chief, Media Relations
Central Intelligence Agency
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Thank you for helping me with my story on college recruitment. I enclose a copy of the final printed version which appeared April 8, 1987.

I do other free-lance work. Please remember me if you have a story that needs to be told accurately and impartially.

Thanks again,

Christopher M. Wright
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CIA recruitment as seen from two sides of battle

By CHRISTOPHER EL WRIGHT

For the Colorado Daily

Student protests have marked the Central Intelligence Agency's recruitment activities on CU's campus for the past three years. Such protests have happened elsewhere, notably at Brown University in Rhode Island and the University of Massachusetts, where the issues have been similar to those raised at CU.

The Daily spoke to Kathy Pherson, the CIA's Chief of Media Relations Staff in Washington, D.C., who has worked with the recruitment issue for six years. For another view, the Daily spoke to James Scarritt, a CU political science professor who circulated a Faculty for Social Responsibility petition within the Political Science Department. The petitioners said the year's suspension was too severe a penalty for the students involved in the November 1986 protests.

The suspensions for all but one student were lifted, but the debate goes on. Here, Pherson and Scarritt join in.

Should the CIA be allowed to recruit new employees on college campuses? Why or why not?

Pherson: The CIA should be allowed to recruit, just like any other major organization. The CIA has career opportunities to offer in international relations, computer science and engineering.

Scarritt: That response ignores the whole issue of the strong possibility that the CIA is engaging in illegal activities. This, of course, was the issue that the students were trying to raise. This issue should be investigated very thoroughly before that question of their being allowed to recruit is answered definitively one way or another.

The protesters allege that the CIA carries on secret wars in Nicaragua, Angola and Afghanistan in supposed violation of international law. Are the allegations true?

Pherson: (Pherson said she could not discuss the particular activities alleged.)

The CIA does not make policy, she said. It supports policy makers. Primarily, the CIA looks at events in foreign countries and assesses their likely impact on the United States. This warning function is the CIA's most important task.

The Security Act of 1947 enables the CIA to engage in other activities at the direction of the president. This is the legal basis for covert action, but those actions are directed by those who set policy.

The agency gets its name "Central" because it stands between the State Department and the Defense Department. It gives the government another option when diplomacy or the sending of Marines is inappropriate.

Scarritt: I don't claim to have definitive proof that (these allegations) are true. But I strongly suspect that they are, and I certainly believe that this issue should be seriously raised. I think that's what the protesters were trying to do. I think that the information-gathering function is what the CIA should be doing. There is inadequate control over covert operations, and this needs to be increased. The government responsible to the public — particularly the legislature — needs to be able to do this.

Covert operations are not justified merely because they originate from policies set by an elected president. This is because the covert operations being discussed may be in violation of international law.

University President Gordon Gee said, "The university will not limit the legal and democratic access to its grounds." The protesters cite alleged violations of international law. Is CIA recruitment a lawful or an unlawful activity?

Pherson: It is a lawful activity. The CIA interviews on 200 campuses by invitation.

The CIA is a legal part of the U.S. government. It receives budget appropriations from Congress and its activities are overseen by Congress and the president. Often, the lives of those who gather information are in the agency's hands. Thus, the CIA cannot tell the general population what it does. But this is a democracy so the CIA informs the elected representatives of the people.

Scarritt: If they are engaging in unlawful activities, the protesters were making the point — and I agree with it — that recruitment of people to engage in those activities then would be a part of the unlawful activities and, hence, unlawful.

The alleged illegal activities are the main focus here. In a democratic society, we need to know what our government is doing.

Have such protests influenced U.S. policy toward Nicaragua?

Pherson: The agency is an objective repository of information. It often tells policy makers what they don't want to hear. Because of this objective stance, Pherson said, she could not discuss her impressions about U.S. policy.

Scarritt: I don't know. I don't think they've influenced the Executive (branch) under the current administration. They may have influenced Congress. Congress seems to be wanting to change the direction of policy toward Nicaragua. The protests may have had some effect (in that).

Have such protests hurt the CIA's ability to recruit?

Pherson: Not really. The CIA has always had more than enough applications. The number of applications seems to be a function of how much press coverage the CIA gets rather than the popularity of U.S. policy.

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Scarritt: I don't honestly know. I suspect that those who would be influenced by the protests would probably not have applied for the CIA positions in the first place.

Are the protests properly viewed as free speech or the obstruction of a legitimate government function?

Pherson: The protests are definitely an exercise of free speech. From time to time, people strongly oppose some aspect of American foreign policy. The CIA does not set policy but it is certainly the right of the demonstrators to protest U.S. policy in this fashion.

Scarritt: I agree completely.

Are CIA recruitment activities properly viewed as an instance of free speech in the marketplace of ideas?

Pherson: CIA recruitment activities are properly viewed as the placement of college students in career opportunities. Students have a right to be interviewed by the CIA. People come into the agency partly because they want to serve their country. It's important to get people with good judgment.

Scarritt: The solicitation of people to commit crimes is not protected by the right to free speech. Suggesting to another that we rob a bank is not protected from prosecution by right to free speech. Recruitment activities are different from speaking out. I don't believe (covert activities) are in the national interest, but I think the CIA coming to campus and saying, 'Yes, covert activities are in the national interest would be free speech and I'd support...their right to say.

Is Nicaragua at the heart of the matter? In other words, would there be such protests if there were no allegations about CIA involvement in Nicaragua?

Pherson: Nicaragua is certainly one reason for the protests. Protests run in cycles. From time to time, some aspect of American foreign policy creates a vocal response from some portion of the population. But remember, U.S. policy toward Nicaragua is now public knowledge. President Reagan feels strongly about it and the Congress has voted funds for the contras.

Scarritt: Certainly in the immediate sense, Nicaragua is very centrally involved here. If it's not the only thing driving (the protests), it's one of the major forces. I think there's a good chance there would be (protests even in the absence of any question about Nicaragua). Nicaragua is not the only place where these covert operations are going on, and certainly the protesters' point is much broader than Nicaragua.

Do some students have the right to determine for all students what organizations may recruit on campus?

Pherson: (I) know of no instance in which a protest has prevented interviews from taking place. So, no rights of any students have been taken away.

Scarritt: I don't think any student has the right to say that recruitment for illegal activities can go on at the campus. I don't think any student has the right to deny any organization that's recruiting for legal activities, moral activities, from campus.

Is there any room for compromise? For example, the CIA must interview candidates from Harvard at the CIA office in downtown Boston.

Pherson: This is up to the administration at each college. In any event, campus interviewing is not the only means to submit an application. Anyone can send a resume to and be in-

terviewed at a CIA regional office.

Scarritt: Part of the reason for the protest at the university was that interviews were going on at the campus. In the end, the issue is these alleged illegal activities. That concern remains unabated, whether they go on campus or off campus.

Do such protests play into the hands of forces unfriendly to the United States, who would like to see the CIA lose access to the best and the brightest graduates?

Pherson: The question is irrelevant because of the system of government we have. The system allows for and is strengthened by a variety of views. A multiplicity of views is not disturbing.

Scarritt: No, I think quite the contrary. The protests support the achievement of the U.S. national interest. They would get the CIA out of (suspected illegal) activities and get the CIA into legal activities that would result in better recruits (and) a more effective pursuit of the national interest.

Is it a decision for the students or for the college administration to make?

Pherson: (I) assume a college administration has the power to make such a decision. But administrations should listen to students for the purpose of detecting strong feelings.

Scarritt: In the last analysis it is a decision for the college administration. But all segments of the university community should have input. The students have done the university a service by pointing out ways of looking at this whole complex problem that the administrators have not taken into account.